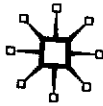


Has Liberalism Failed Women?

Assuring Equal Representation in
Europe and the United States

Jytte Klausen and Charles S. Maier, eds.

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HAS LIBERALISM FAILED WOMEN?

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movements, role models, mass media, and educational practices. They contribute to the sharpening of awareness, to the unfolding of largely sublegal civilizing processes, the promotion and gradual spread of standards of decency and civility. Such intangible forces of cultural change strengthen capacities for self-policing within civil society, as a consequence of which certain discriminatory modes of speaking and acting in intergender relations come to be recognized as inappropriate. The same happens with patterns of recruitment and promotion. Such pattern of reflective awareness, though unevenly distributed and often defective, contributes more to the gradual overcoming of gender injustices than do the bureaucratic activities of "equalization officers" (*Gleichstellungsbeauftragte*) mandated by German law for universities and other public sector employers. The problem here, as in many other policy areas, is that legal standards cannot effectively be enforced by state agencies, at least not without the risk of counterintentional second-order effects, such as retaliatory actions directed at those who are the intended beneficiaries of legal intervention. Instead of parity statutes, we need to rely on the forces of civil society to overcome patterns and practices of discrimination, in politics as elsewhere.

Notes

1. This is the revised and expanded version of the paper I presented at the opening panel of the conference that is documented in the present volume. Because I was assigned the task by the organizers to ask questions rather than to present findings, this paper comes without references. Very helpful comments and suggestions were received from the participants of the conference, especially from Jytte Klausen and Jane Mansbridge. The author also wishes to acknowledge the careful and critical reading of the manuscript by Susanne Fuchs.
2. Such bootstrapping acts have actually been performed in the past. An example is the transition from a male-only system of voting to the granting of female voting rights. These rights have obviously been granted by male-dominated legislatures and constitutional assemblies. Moreover, they have been advocated and eventually implemented by leftist and liberal political parties who could be almost certain that, given typical party preferences exhibited by women at the time, they themselves would not stand to benefit from the institutional innovation of the extension of the right to vote to women.
3. I write "political" as opposed to special representation rights in the job market, in the leadership of organizations, or in higher education.
4. Jon Elster, *Sour Grapes: Studies in the Subversion of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Chapter Four

The French Parity Movement

Françoise Gaspard

At the beginning of the 1990s the French feminist movement seemed particularly weak, almost invisible, as if it had gone out of fashion. There no longer seemed to be any obvious objectives capable of mobilizing and unifying activists to fight for the equality of women and men. The dominant republican ideology required that intellectuals, like responsible French politicians, remain especially reluctant to take any positive action that might contradict the universalist ideal. And in contrast to the increased attention in other countries to the underrepresentation of women in institutions over the previous decade, the movement in favor of parity in France was particularly inactive. Hence, it is quite astonishing to see now the success that the demands for parity have had in France—that is to say, for the equal representation of women and men in decision-making positions, in particular, in elected assemblies. In fact, in less than a decade, what was regarded as a marginal demand and a break with national tradition spawned a militant mobilization that achieved inscription of the demand for parity in the Constitution and in the law. How may we explain this quite sudden and astonishing success? How was this idea imposed on the political agenda in spite of vigorous resistance? What were the consequences of the revision of the Constitution voted in the spring of 1999 and of the laws flowing from it?

The disparity between the general position of women in French society at the end of the 1980s and their persistent marginalization in the political decision-making process is one of the major reasons for the support for parity in public opinion. At the time, the French lived under the fiction of equality between women and men. Formal equality had been established (or almost); what more could women ask for? Certainly, inequalities persisted in

real life, but they were progressively receding, said the optimists. French women became citizens only after the Second World War, and they waited until the 1970s before civil law recognized them as equal to men in the family. In this case women just had to be patient, as they often have had to be; they would soon catch up. But this perspective did not take into account the profound transformations women had undergone over the previous 30 years in their lives, their perception of themselves and society, and consequently their relations to men. The "catch-up" view did not appreciate women's growing intolerance of their own marginalization in the political, administrative, or economic world.

Every year since 1971 more young women than young men have entered into the university system and continued their studies. While the latter remain the majority in the so-called hard sciences (mathematics, physics, technology), the former predominate in literature, the human sciences, law, business and medicine.¹ The education of young women has further increased women's participation in the labor market, which has always been quite high in France. Over the course of these last three decades, in spite of the economic crisis, women's labor market participation has taken on a permanent character. In the past, motherhood had interrupted women's salaried work. Women would stop working to raise their children and then return to employment when the children reached adolescence. Now, 80 percent of French women between 25 and 49 years of age are gainfully employed. Many no longer consider the occupation of a salaried position as a moment in their lives, but they value it as a career that they can (and want) to pursue, despite the difficulties of balancing paid work and motherhood.²

Along with advances in education and employment, a 1967 law allowing French women to use contraceptives significantly contributed to the social transformations of the last decades. Initially, women of the middle classes, better informed than those of the lower classes, were the first to benefit from this law. But the use of contraception has now become universal, largely due to the actions of family planning centers, the availability of information in the schools, and the low cost of the birth-control pill. In 1974 a law legalizing abortion was passed, as a result of feminists' strong mobilization efforts. In reality, this legislation simply expanded access to abortion and enabled women to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

Educated in the same schools with boys,³ engaged in active professional lives, able to decide to have children or not, and if so, then to determine the moment when they will have them, French women acquired a quite unanticipated autonomy. Most women have ceased to be financially dependent on their spouses. A recent study by the National Institute of Demographic Studies indicates the point at which this autonomy has become

a reality: the number of marriages in France is rapidly declining to the benefit of "free unions." Fifty-two percent of women bringing their first child into the world are not married, and births outside of marriage have increased from 6 percent in 1967 to 40 percent in 1997. This revolution seems to be for the most part linked to the fact that women no longer feel the need to be protected by a legal connection; they no longer depend on a spouse in order to live and raise their children. The decline in the number of marriages corresponds, in fact, to the decline in the number of women who stay at home. This latter group has fallen from 3 million in 1990 to 2.4 million in 1999.

French women have achieved not only near legal equality but also rights that allow them to demonstrate their independence. Nevertheless, their wages remain 20 to 30 percent lower than those for men doing equivalent work, and if men hold equal or superior credentials, they are still preferred to women in the labor market. Moreover, women occupy the majority of temporary and part-time positions, most often not by choice. In spite of their academic success and their growing presence in professional life, women rarely advance into positions of authority. Not one woman heads a top 200 French company, and women make up only 7 percent of all managing executives in the country's top 5,000 firms. In the highest levels of public administration, even though equality has been a principle of administration since 1945, women are the exception (among ambassadors 4 percent are women, among the heads of central administration management fewer than 10 percent are women). Only a short while ago it seemed "natural" not to question these disparities. And when questioned, they were explained away as being progressively overcome, or as resulting from women's refusal to accept such responsibilities.

At that time no one questioned the sex of those in authority in the public sphere. Even French feminists, whose job was to think about social change, were not at all (or very little) interested in this question. Societal change was nevertheless of a sufficient scale to justify an analysis of the causes of men's persistent dominance in positions of power, and to test the heuristic value of the concept of gender—indeed, to enrich it. The concept of gender allows us to escape from a structuralist interpretation of women and men and their relations, to say and to see that the attributed personas of woman and man are neither fixed nor subject to linear evolution. We can see that over the course of one or two generations, gender relations in French society have changed because women have changed, and more than men. The contraceptive revolution, in particular, introduced a considerable rupture that proved difficult to mend. The national strike of November 25, 1995, protesting against the government's proposed restrictions on access to contraception and abortion, gave evidence to that

effect. The Right was returned to power in 1993 and Jacques Chirac was elected president in 1995. On the initiative of women's movements, more than 100,000 people descended on the streets of Paris and in numerous other French cities. One had not seen so many French women mobilized since the strike of October 6, 1974, when women had demanded the right to abortion and to expanded access to abortion services.

The events of 1995 revealed that young women in particular regarded the equality with which they had grown up as nonnegotiable. They unexpectedly discovered that a return to the past was possible at a time when feminism seemed to them, only a short while ago, to belong to the past. They suddenly felt the necessity to reflect collectively on their situation. In universities, women students on their own initiative created small groups, the goal of which was not only to preserve the rights acquired by preceding generations but also to denounce misogyny, often with humor. At the same time, in contrast to similar groups in the 1970s, these women students wanted their groups to be mixed. They could not conceive of the possibility that a struggle for a more egalitarian society could be waged without the participation of men, without men's cooperation, and without changing them first of all. These young women assumed that their issues mattered. Because they saw themselves as future leaders and made their professional careers a high priority, they were intrigued by the idea of parity—even if the means to get there provoked many furious debates amongst them. Through their own experiences, supported by statistics, they discovered that there were still as few women in important decision-making positions as in their mothers' time.

At the start of the 1990s women's groups and organizations began to use the word *parity*, and under the pressure of a series of national and international political events, the parity movement was born. The year 1995 may be considered the movement's point of departure, at least in France. But equal representation of women and men in elected assemblies was not then a completely new idea; it had first emerged in supranational organizations. In 1989, inspired by the broad reflections on the nature of democracy initiated by the collapse of the communist regimes, the Council of Europe held a seminar in Strasbourg to discuss important questions. Do the old democracies make good role models for countries in transition? Is it not necessary at a time when these new countries aspire to rejoin Western Europe to carry out a self-critique? Free universal suffrage is one criterion of democracy, but in the West electoral participation is declining, betraying many citizens' doubts about their own system of government. The rise of populist parties was disquieting. And corrupt "affairs" undermined the ideal of the people's representative, necessarily honest and devoted to the public interest. Finally, the question arose: can a democracy in

which women are absent (or almost absent) from the deliberation on questions concerning the community's future really be considered democratic?

Since 1995 the European Commission also has put this question on its agenda, within the framework of the Third Program, to find a path to equality of opportunity for women and men. The question of sexual equality was not originally within the community's domain, according to the Treaty of Rome (which is still the Charter of Europe extended from 6 to 12 states), except in the matter of salaries. In order to avoid unfair competition between countries in which women's labor is abundant and underpaid and countries in which it is neither, it was decided that one of the objectives of the Common Market would be equal pay for equal work. Despite these regulations, over the course of more than a quarter of a century the differences between men's and women's salaries have not been substantially reduced. In order to understand the causes of this continuing disparity, was it not necessary to look at who makes the laws and negotiates the salary agreements in each country? The commission then launched a program to study the place of women in positions of political, economic, and social decision-making power. Over the next five years the program was to determine the gender composition of power in the European Union member countries.

With the exception of the new "alternative" political movements, ecologists in particular, the question of the near-complete absence of women from the political world was at the same time a taboo subject. The activists in the French political parties who dared to touch on it were dismissed as feminists from another age; the parties had other concerns. Because feminist movements had declined, political organizations did not have to consider the question of sexual equality. The issue even disappeared from electoral platforms. Once the Left won the French presidential and legislative elections in 1981, receiving considerable support from women voters, it forgot its promises; without a sound many feminists themselves withdrew from the parties in power.⁴ One hardly dared suggest the introduction of a quota system for parties or on the electoral lists, let alone oversee its implementation. North European social democratic parties had, in fact, pushed earlier for quotas, a claim at the heart of the parties of the Left in the 1970s. Since 1974 the Socialist party has had a quota rule in its statutes. At first the quota required that women occupy a modest ten percent of managing positions and party electoral lists for proportional polls, but this has been progressively raised to 30 percent.⁵ At the beginning of the last decade, one could nevertheless conclude that quotas were not generally respected, at least for the lists of candidates in elections. Other than a small minority among female party members, activist feminists had never unanimously supported quotas. They argued that the 10, 20, or even 30

percent mandate functioned as a ceiling—once attained it would never be surpassed, serving as a fixed apportionment of women. Moreover, many women found it humiliating. Some argued that such quotas were ridiculous because statistically women made up about half of the population; others stressed that quotas threatened to discredit those women who managed to get elected on their own merits. Women who were recruited in order to achieve the 10, 20, or 30 percent quotas were in the end generally chosen by men working in a system that isolated women, especially those who might pose a threat to those men's power.

The word *parity* met with rapid success because it allowed us to escape the logic of quotas, which were always fixed at a level that kept women in the minority. The word *parity* is itself a synonym of equality—of “perfect” equality, according to the Larousse dictionary. In reality, we were very far from the parity ideal. In November 1992, the European Commission held a conference in Athens on the theme “Women in Power,” which triggered a social movement and a movement of opinion throughout Europe, and in France in particular. For the first time, the press and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were given a statistical table showing the numbers of women in the political decision-making bodies in Europe and an early analysis of the reasons behind the disparities. Having always considered itself the country of the Rights of Man, France now found itself at the bottom of the list, along with Greece, with respect to the participation of women in national legislatures.

In the face of such surprisingly brutal numbers, it became difficult to blame women, or their political “backwardness,” for a situation that defied political scientists' traditional explanations. Neither the number of years of universal suffrage, nor the country's dominant religion, nor the participation of women in the labor force, nor even the country's mode of election served to explain the disparities between European countries in terms of the place of women in each country's national parliament.⁶ Sociologists and political scientists were forced to study and investigate more closely the reasons for the persistent masculinity of power. Many colloquia and seminars were convened to address this question. It appeared that the principal cause of the rarity of elected women was to be found in the functioning of the political parties, in particular in the candidate selection process. This was especially true in the case of France, where the parties are not mass organizations; parties function as clubs in which the elected (hence mainly men) dominate numerically and are in a position of power. The party is an instrument to assure their reelection and, if possible, to win more elected offices. Consequently, it is difficult for activists to break into party electoral lists. Incumbents possess numerous advantages.⁷ They wield the social capital of fame and can claim responsibility for all accomplished

work. They also benefit from a political system that allows them to accumulate multiple elected positions. Activists are forced to succumb to this principle of reality: they prefer that their party win the election than that more women are elected. The 1993 parliamentary elections furnished proof that this system allowed the political elite to reproduce itself, or almost; election after election, the percentage of female elected deputies remained almost the same, rising from 5.6 percent in the National Assembly after the 1988 elections to 5.9 percent in the new assembly. This percentage was even more scandalous because nearly the same number of women had been elected deputies to the first National Assembly following the introduction of universal suffrage in 1945. Those activists concerned about parity were forced to call for a law requiring parties to nominate and have elected as many women as men. The first national public strike for the demand was spectacular. On November 10, 1993, the newspaper *Le Monde* published a page-long manifesto symbolically signed by 577 people (288 women and 287 men)—the number of deputies sitting in the National Assembly. The proclamation asserted that without imposing a constraint on the parties' candidate selection process, it would be difficult to imagine a change in the assembly's sexual composition.

The popularity of the demand—the media provided much coverage of this manifesto—required the politically accountable to give some signs of effort. Thus, during the European elections of 1994, several party lists, including that of the Socialist Party, maintained gender parity. During the presidential campaign of 1995, the principal candidates were forced to use the word *parity*, which had until then been applied only to the formation of social parity (negotiations between employers and labor unions were often referred to as “parity negotiations”) or relations between national currencies. Several candidates, including Jacques Chirac and Lionel Jospin, even worked to augment the participation of women at all levels of public and political decision-making. A new stage seemed to be reached when the first government designated by the new president of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, included a larger proportion of women (36 percent), a record in the history of the Republic. Nevertheless, a few months later, on the occasion of a cabinet reshuffle designed to “tighten” the government in order to improve its effectiveness, the women were sacrificed, their percentage dropping to 12 percent. This affair provoked considerable reaction and the drafting of a common text by women of the Right and Left who had held ministerial positions, published by an important weekly paper, calling for parity.

The Socialist Party (PS), severely beaten in the 1993 legislative elections, was looking for new ideas. Its leader, Lionel Jospin, was convinced of the necessity to rediscover the support of the feminine electorate and

equally of the necessity to feminize the management and representation of his party. He had planned to force the party to ensure that women would represent at least 30 percent of his party's candidates to be presented at the legislative elections scheduled for 1998.⁸ Such quotas had, of course, been much decried. But Jospin presented this one as an important first step toward parity. In order to achieve this objective, the PS adopted a method comparable to one that the British Labor Party was introducing at about the same time: on the basis of a national accord with the PS departmental leaders, only women candidates could participate in the internal primaries in one electoral district out of three.⁹ The proposal was contested on the grounds that it discriminated against men. Some men also complained that it was absurd because the party would never find enough women. Nevertheless, the PS adopted the principle, and one observed that not only was there no lack of women candidates but that in many "women only" electoral districts, there was a plurality of female candidates. Nearly half the women candidates declared that they would not have stood for election had the electoral district not been reserved, because they believed that a man would have been in a better position to win or that they had not thought to run before. The women candidates won in larger numbers than was foreseen.¹⁰ Nevertheless, even though the Left won these elections, the number of women elected was modest: in 1993, 35 women, or 6 percent of the National Assembly, were elected. Following the 1997 legislative elections, there were 62 women elected, or barely 11 percent.

The Left returned to power. In his inaugural address before Parliament in June 1997, the new prime minister, Lionel Jospin, announced that his government would propose a revision of the Constitution to allow for laws designed to prescribe parity in elected assemblies. The government's demand for parity awakened the old conflict between "egalitarian" and "difference" feminists. The partisans of parity were accused by the egalitarian current of defending a naturalist concept of human gender, of "biologizing" society and the citizenry. In fact, one found among the "paritistes" women who defended parity in the name of "differences between the sexes," for example, Sylviane Agazinski.¹¹ Others, however, supported the egalitarian current, for example, Éliane Viennot.¹² The tension between equality and difference is an old story when it is a question of equality between women and men.

Joan Scott has judiciously chosen for a title of a recent work a phrase from Olympe de Gouges, who on the eve of the French Revolution already summed up women's dilemma: "only paradoxes to offer."¹³ Women have in fact only paradoxes to offer. How is it actually possible to ask for equality *for women* without asking *as women*, since it is as women that equality is refused them? The philosopher Françoise Collin was one of the

first to criticize parity.¹⁴ She argued that "this strategy targets not a biological category but an identifiable social group." She does not imply that this group be endowed with a definable and immutable identity, but observes only that it exists in fact and is repairable as such. The constitution of this social group is not an invention of feminism, or of "paritistes," but first of all a product of the social mechanisms and secular politics of our society, and of all the previous history that has made women into a marginalized group.¹⁵

Jospin's June 1997 announcement of the revision of the Constitution re-ignited the debate, quickly mobilizing the adversaries of parity. Thirty-four philosophers, jurists, sociologists (among them 23 women) put together a resolution denouncing the government's project with great virulence.¹⁶ Interestingly, most of these authors were situated on the left of the political chessboard. In their view, legislation designed to guarantee equal access of women and men to mandates and appointments would put the Republic in danger and betray the universalist ideal. The political scientist, Evelyne Pisier, writes "that difference blossoms in actions, but does not cede one inch on the principle of equality before the law." On the other hand, the philosopher Elisabeth Badinter labeled the proposed measure a "regression," agreeing with Alain-Gérard Slama, a political scientist and editorial contributor to *Le Figaro*, that such legislation recalls nothing less than the Vichy regime and fascism. A deputy of the Right took up the same argument, equating the government's proposed revision with the Nuremberg Laws. Clearly strong passions infused the debate.

Surprisingly, the intellectuals arguing against the parity amendment ignored the fact that the word *woman* was long ago imbedded in French law. The French Constitution's preamble includes the statement that "the law guarantees to the woman, in all domains, rights equal to those of the man."¹⁷ Sex is also already present in the law, even omnipresent. It is one of the fundamental categories of civil law and lies at the foundation of our daily lives and social existence. Without her or his consent, each individual is attributed a sex (boy or girl) at birth. This sex, declared to the civil state, accompanies each person throughout her or his life and determines much of her or his social development. Another controversy that has agitated the intellectual milieu—same-sex marriages—has also shown the centrality of sex in the law. Curiously, it has also revealed that those denouncing parity as the "biologization" of society are opposed, with the same vigor, to the legal recognition of lesbian and gay couples. They argue that this would imperil the difference between the sexes, which must have its place, according to sociologist Nathalie Heinich, in her essay on the "context of the laws of the family."¹⁸ She suggests that we should ignore sex in public matters but preserve its normative role in civil law.

Other parity opponents argue that parity legislation would open the door to all "communitarians." Parity, it is argued, would justify claims of Muslims and Jews, young and old, to obtain representation corresponding to their numeric presence in society. This is strange reasoning, because women do not constitute a "community" but are a part of all communities. Women are, as I have argued elsewhere, a "category" in law, and they cannot escape this juridical identity by religious conversion, intermarriage, or changing their social status. French law avoids any reference to a citizen's origins, social status, skin color, or religion. France considers all persons to be equal in their rights and duties. But because of their sex, women have been sent back to nature, excluded for a century and a half from the citizenry, dominated, domesticated, and treated as "minors" once they were married. Unlike men, women acquired legal equality only recently, gradually, and not through a single decision that would have made of them the equals of men.

Society does not evolve "naturally." One of the founders of the Third Republic, Léon Gambetta, loved to say, "that which constitutes true democracy is not to acknowledge all are equal but to make them." Progress requires a program of political action. In a democracy the law's function is to shape the rules necessary to reduce inequality. The Left has long believed in using legislative power to promote equality, which in most cases implies introducing constraints on citizens' behavior. For example, the French republicans of the 1870s believed that providing all children with access to free education was a means to create equality. This led to a "scholarly obligation." Requiring parents to send their children to school provoked a debate: was it not a limit on the liberty of families, and more exactly on paternal authority? We know that even today not all children would be educated if school were not obligatory. It is not then for reasons of "nature" that positive action to provide women access to decision-making positions should be taken, but in order to correct the effects of history that have excluded or marginalized them.

The revision of the Constitution in June 1999 makes it possible to create laws obliging political parties and groups to present as many women as men during elections, at least for certain elections. The plan is, in fact, technically complex. It is possible to make simple rules for elections held on the basis of proportional principles with party lists but it is difficult in the case of plurality elections. Now, the two types of election are in use in France. The adopted law requires party organizations in communes with more than 3,500 inhabitants to present parity lists. The same applies to regional elections and a number of Senate seats elected by party list, as well as for European parliamentary elections. The part of the law requiring parity not only of candidacy but also of result does not apply to national parliamentary

elections. Deputies are in fact elected in single-member districts. Instead, the government proposed a financial sanction (parties in France are in part publicly financed); parties that do not present 50 percent women will have their public funding reduced.

Both female and male politicians, who supported parity before the Parliament as a principle, have criticized the enacted parity legislation. Without a doubt it would have been preferable that the laws proposed to Parliament were conceived as a strategy and not as a dogma justified by the biological difference between the sexes. Thus, I did not think, as did also many legal scholars, that the time had come to pass a constitutional amendment, because it was not necessary.¹⁹ The government could have simply asserted, by virtue of the Preamble of the Constitution, that it is the role of the law to guarantee sexual equality. It could have also stressed that the jurisprudence of the 1982 Constitutional Council had been displaced, when in 1983 France ratified the 1979 International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, without opposition from the Constitutional Council. The states that introduced this convention into their law empowered themselves to take measures of positive action to create equality, notably in representation. At a given historical moment, parity can be a means to experiment with equality between the two socially and juridically constructed genders as they are inscribed today in the law, which can and must evolve. Such a law, conceived as temporary, would have stated that it did not institute the "difference between the sexes" as an intangible norm but aimed at correcting the consequences of a juridicosocial construction by experimenting with numerical equality in representation.

One thing is certain: the parity movement has in Europe in any case, and in France in particular shown that the absence or the scarcity of women in the elected assemblies is the product of exclusion and a mark of an archaic political culture. Parity in decision-making positions at the local, national, and international level will mean neither the end of male domination in all its manifestations nor the end of the story. It will not put an end to all injustices, inequalities, and violence. But it may be a means to deepen democracy.

Notes

1. Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet, *Allez les filles!* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1992).
2. Margaret Maruani, ed., *Les nouvelles frontières de l'inégalité, hommes et femmes sur le marché du travail* (Paris: La Découverte, 1998).

3. The French government resolved to mix genders in schools in 1959, but this was not implemented across the entire educational system until the 1970s.
4. Jane Jenson and Mariette Sineau, *Mitterrand et les Françaises: un rendez-vous manqué* (Paris: Presses des sciences politiques, 1995).
5. On this point see "Actualité de la parité," *Projet féministe* 4-5 (1996).
6. Proportional representation is reputed to be more favorable to the representation of women. In 1986 France experimented with this type of polling in the elections to the National Assembly, but the number of women elected did not increase.
7. In 1999 men constituted 92 percent of mayors and 94 percent of county counselors, two strategic elected mandates that help lay the foundations for one's candidacy to become a deputy or senator.
8. The President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, decided in April 1997 to dissolve the National Assembly and to precede to the anticipated elections, which took place in May and June 1997.
9. The department is a French administrative unit that goes back to the Revolution of 1789. The departments are divided into electoral districts for elections to the National Assembly.
10. See Françoise Gaspard and Philippe Bataille, *Comment les femmes changent la politique et pourquoi les hommes résistent* (Paris: Éditions de la Découverte, 1999).
11. Sylviane Agacinski, *Politique des sexes* (Paris: Seuil, 1998).
12. See in particular Elianne Viennot, *La démocratie "à la française" ou les femmes indésirables* (Paris: Publications de l'Université de Paris 7-Denis-Diderot, 1995).
13. Joan W. Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).
14. Françoise Collin, "La parité, une autre démocratie en France," *Les Cahiers du GRIF* 47 (June 1993): 137-141.
15. Françoise Collin, *Le différend des sexes* (Paris: Éditions Pleins Feux, 1999), 72.
16. Micheline Amar, ed., *Le piège de la parité. Arguments pour un débat* (Paris: Hachette-Littératures, 1999).
17. This article appears in the preamble of the Constitution of 1946, which is part of the French "constitutional bloc."
18. Nathalie Heinich, "Les fins, les moyens, les principes, trois lignes de clivage," in *Le piège de la parité*, 145-150.
19. Françoise Gaspard, "La parité, principe ou stratégie?" *Le Monde Diplomatique* (November 1998).

Part II

Parity as an Electoral Issue